

budget that had been used to train officers and develop crime-fighting programs. The state Emergency Management Agency found incomplete records and irregularities for each of the three years the unit was awarded funds.

2007

Centers for Disease Control (CDC) can't find \$22 million in equipment. More than \$22 million worth of scientific equipment and other items is missing from the CDC, raising "troubling issues" about the Atlanta-based agency's ability to manage its property, according to members of a congressional oversight committee. There were 5,547 items of property, worth more than \$22 million, unaccounted for at CDC as of February 22, 2007.

CDC funded Hollywood to help write TV Shows with millions from taxpayers.

CDC has spent \$2.01 million—and plans to spend up to \$250,000 in FY08—to fund a Hollywood liaison to help TV shows like "General Hospital," "The Young & The Restless," and "24" with their fictitious storylines. CDC used \$51,500 in CDC terrorism funds for the Hollywood liaison program. Based on CDC data, the agency spent approximately \$6,000 per TV episode consultation. CDC's media affairs office could field questions from the entertainment industry and free up millions in CDC funds for health and biosecurity needs.

NIH paying \$1.3 million monthly for unused lab as vibrations still an issue at new Baltimore facility. The federal government has begun paying millions of dollars in rent for a new medical laboratory facility in Southeast Baltimore, but federal scientists, who were supposed to relocate there a year ago, are still months away from moving in. The National Institutes of Health expects it will take three more months to determine whether vibration problems with the building have been fixed and whether all scientists who were supposed to transfer there will be able to. The Sun reported last year that the agency and many researchers feared the vibrations would skew results of sensitive microscopes and other lab equipment. The \$250 million building, called the Biomedical Research Center, is on the Johns Hopkins Bayview Medical Center campus. The building has been promoted as a state-of-the-art facility for research programs on aging and drug abuse, and is a cornerstone for redevelopment in the Southeast Baltimore neighborhood. Last month, NIH began paying more than \$1.3 million a month in rent and upkeep.

Feds Spending Thousands of Tarpayer Dollars on Social Networking Sites.

Most federal agencies maintain websites publicizing their mission, work and outreach. Some press reports estimate the number of federal websites to be in the range of 20,000. Apparently the proliferation of websites promoting U.S. government federal agencies and their work is not enough. Some agencies, such as the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) at the Department of Health and Human Services, the National Aeronautic and Space Administration (NASA) and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) at the Department of Commerce are looking towards social networking sites as a new publicity front. NOAA has spent 25,000 for publicity on Care2 networking site to promote 2008 as the "International Year of the Reef" and hosts "virtual island" on the Second Life site.

Over \$100 million in fraud is found in the Federal Employee Health Program.

The Inspector General for the Office of Personnel Management (OPM), the federal agency that administers health benefits for government employees, found that the health benefits program was defrauded of \$106 mil-

lion by participating providers. According to the OIG report, the fraudulent spending came as the result of medical companies overcharging the government or arranging kickback schemes to promote the use of their products. OPM recovered \$97 million from a large settlement with one such company, and the largest case resulted in a \$155 million settlement from Medco Health Solutions, which provides mail order prescriptions and related benefits to federal employees. The company settled a complaint that it paid kickbacks to health plans to gain their business, took money from drug manufacturers to favor their drugs and destroyed prescriptions to avoid penalties for delays in filling them.

NASA's 4-Star parties cost taxpayers millions as agency pays \$4 million a year for resort parties to honor some employees and lots of NASA contractors. On the same day NASA got an emergency \$1 billion in extra appropriations from the Senate, and former astronaut and Senator Ben Nelson (D-NE) said, "Right now we're at a critical point because NASA has been starved of funds." NASA put out a bid request for a four-star hotel for its December awards ceremony that will cost taxpayers between \$400,000 and \$500,000. A NASA spokesman sat down with CBS News and didn't think the event was frivolous or extravagant. In fact, instead of asking taxpayers if the resort parties should be a priority, he told CBS, "I think what I would do is ask the people who we have honored to give me an idea if they think this thing was reasonable, if they felt they were honored properly." NASA holds such a party every time there's a shuttle launch, for what CBS estimates is about \$4 million a year. This December's event will be the third of 2007. Amazingly, when asked by CBS News if NASA was told to cut their party money in half, its spokesman said, "If we were told that we had to reduce it I think we would reduce the number of honorees rather than trying to go to a poor place or a place that doesn't have good service."

Snacks Take Big Bite Out of DOJ Budget.—"double-dipping" for meal reimbursement by DOJ employees increases cost to taxpayers. An internal Justice audit showed the department spent nearly \$7 million to plan, host, or send employees to 10 conferences over the last two years. This included paying \$4 per meatball at one lavish dinner and spreading an average of \$25 worth of snacks around to each participant at a movie-themed party. The report, which looked at the 10 priciest Justice Department conferences between October 2004 and September 2006, was ordered by the Senate Appropriations Committee. It also found that three-quarters of the employees who attended the conferences demanded daily reimbursement for the cost of meals while traveling—effectively double-dipping into government funds. The audit did not compare Justice's conference costs to those at other government agencies.

Pentagon paid \$998,798 to ship two 19-cent washers as little oversight lead to blatant abuse of system. A small South Carolina parts supplier collected about \$20.5 million over, six years from the Pentagon for fraudulent shipping costs, including \$998,798 for sending two 19-cent washers to an Army base in Texas, U.S. officials said. The company also billed and was paid \$455,009 to ship three machine screws costing \$1.31 each to Marines in Habbaniyah, Iraq, and \$293,451 to ship an 89-cent split washer to Patrick Air Force Base in Cape Canaveral, Florida, Pentagon records show.

Untold Millions, Spent on Repetitive "Bullying" Programs in Multiple Federal Agencies? One program, HRSA's "Stop Bullying Now" was estimated to cost \$6.5 million in 2

years. In 2004, the Health Resources and Service's Administration (HRSA) through the Health and Human Services Administration (HHS) launched the program Stop Bullying Now. The extensive website includes a "stop bullying now jingle," 12 games ("Bully-wood Squares," connect the dots to reveal the bully, (etc), 12 "animated webisodes" featuring characters that "just might remind you of people you know." (see illustration) along with a promise to "post a new one every couple of weeks," along with advice and letters from HRSA's bullying "experts," Senator Ortega and Mr. Bittner. CNN reported in 2003 that HRSA's bullying program would cost \$3.4 million. However, in a response to a July 2006 congressional request, HRSA reported that \$6.2 million had been spent since the establishment of the program, almost double the amount of the original estimation. The program was not enumerated in HRSA's 2007 or 2008 budget justifications submitted by the agency to Congress.

Comic Capers at NIH. Congress doubled funding for the National Institutes of Health (NIH) over the past decade. While we haven't discovered a cure for cancer yet, the agency does provide you the opportunity to create and print your very own Garfield comic strips.

\$61.7 million in federal AIDS funds went unspent that could have been used to treat patients on AIDS drug waiting lists. An HHS OIG report reveals that bureaucratic inaction at the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), not a lack of federal resources, has contributed to the patient waiting lists for AIDS drugs. "HRSA did not use the offset authority provided by the CARE Act and HHS grants policy to manage States' unobligated balances. . . . By doing so, HRSA would have had available a larger amount of current-year funding to address program needs. For example, the offsetting option might have been useful in grant year 2002, when 10 States had unobligated Title II balances totaling \$61.7 million and 8 States had no balances or small balances and a documented need for additional resources. HRSA stated that it had opted against using the offset authority provided by the CARE Act.

Over \$45 million in Title I Ryan White CARE Act funds unspent over 5 year period while AIDS patients wait for drug assistance. The Health and Human Services Inspector General issued a review of unspent Ryan White CARE Act Title I funds (AIDS care grants provided to 51 metropolitan areas in the U.S.) and found that 46 eligible areas carried over more than \$45 million in unspent federal funds from two to five years beyond the original budget period between 1999 and 2003. During this period, there were hundreds of patients on waiting lists for AIDS Drug Assistance Programs throughout the country. A number of patients on these waiting lists died in South Carolina, Kentucky and West Virginia.

The Washington Post reported that NIH was paying an employee \$100,000 a year to do nothing. According to the article, "NIH Scientist Says He's Paid To Do Nothing: Agency Denies Administrator's Surreal Situation of Collecting \$100,000 Salary for No Work," every weekday at 6.30 a.m., Edward McSweeney climbs into his Volkswagen Passat for the hour-long commute to the National Institutes of Health. He has an office in Bethesda, a job title—health scientist administrator—and an annual salary of about \$100,000. What McSweeney says he does not have—and has not had for the last seven years—is any real work. He was hired by the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious